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**Statement to the Government Administration and Elections Committee
By Chris Powell, Managing Editor, Journal Inquirer
On behalf of the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information**

**In regard to Raised Bill 772
An Act Concerning the Freedom of Information Act
Monday, February 2, 2009**

My name is Chris Powell, I live in Manchester, I'm the managing editor of the Journal Inquirer there, and I'm legislative chairman for the Connecticut Council on Freedom of Information, which I represent in opposing Raised Bill 772, "An Act Concerning the Freedom of Information Act."

Raised Bill 772 presumes that posting the minutes of public agency meetings on the Internet is a great hardship and expense, and the bill's intent is to postpone indefinitely any enforcement of the recent law requiring public agencies to make such postings.

Such a presumption is not correct. These days teen-agers and even pre-teens easily set up and maintain their own Internet sites for free. Posting text at such sites is no more complicated than typing the minutes of a meeting. Many if not most Connecticut towns have established their own Internet sites. Some have incurred a certain expense in this but that's not the only way to do it. I suspect that those who are trying to undo the law have put more effort into undoing it than would be necessary to learn how to comply with it.

In any case, the minutes-posting law seems likely to *save* time and expense for public agencies almost from the outset. For once a public agency's minutes and other records are posted on the Internet, they become available to the whole world around the clock, and inquiries and requests to harried agency record keepers can be directed to the Internet or, better still, completely pre-empted by the greater accessibility to the public. When meeting minutes and other public records are posted on the Internet, requests from the public for access and for copies are likely to diminish substantially.

Advocates of Raised Bill 772 should be asked to describe the efforts they have made to comply with the minutes-posting law and to learn what it takes to start and operate an Internet site. If this mandate really has stumped them, I'm sure they could get some advice from any town that is operating its own Internet site, from the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities, or the state Department of Information Technology. Just a little effort to get started here is bound to serve the public better and reduce costs as well.

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